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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM: Problems of the Soviet Leadership

1. There are unmistakable signs that disagreements and differences are now plaguing the top Soviet leadership. These differences do not yet appear serious enough to impair the normal functioning of the government.

2. At this stage, however, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about how deep the crisis is. That there is trouble and tension within the Soviet leadership seems almost undeniable. It also seems clear that Khrushchev has been on the defensive on some issues and that his detractors have grown bolder. Beyond this the picture is murky indeed.

3. The critical question of whether and how far Khrushchev's control may have been weakened remains unanswerable at this time. Khrushchev in the past has backed and filled on a number of his experimental policy innovations without any impairment to his control. Recent reversals of some of his policies may have been the result of pressure from his colleagues without necessarily indicating a concerted effort on their part to undermine his control. There are other developments which suggest that Khrushchev can still exert his will when he feels it is vital.

4. Nevertheless, it appears that enough opposition to Khrushchev is asserting itself to make the situation intolerable from his standpoint. His past behavior would indicate that he will not stand idly by while his opponents gather strength. He is expected to return to Moscow within a week or ten days, and we would not be surprised to see him attempt a decisive display of authority which could take the form of a new policy statement or of further top-level personnel changes, or both. However, the balance of forces within the leadership may now be so fine that he will find it politically inexpedient to force a showdown at this time and he may be forced to temporize.

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DISCUSSION

5. There has been widespread speculation in Moscow recently--both among politically sensitive elements of the public and within the diplomatic colony--that there is a crisis in the Soviet leadership and that Khrushchev's position is likely to be affected. The American Embassy has noted that this almost open awareness by Moscow citizens of an unusual political situation, and its expression in speculation about high-level changes, is a new phenomenon in the Soviet capital. In fact, it is becoming a common topic of conversation that the leaders recently have been, and probably still are, plagued with numerous controversial policy decisions and that disagreements and divisions at the top do exist.

6. One event which helped to set off the wave of speculation concerning the Soviet leadership was the public appearance of Khrushchev and party secretary Kozlov at a routine opera performance in early March. This was the first time anyone in Moscow could remember an occasion when an announcement was made that Khrushchev went to the theatre with only one of his colleagues. Some members of the Western community linked it to the rumors that Khrushchev intends to divest himself of some of his responsibilities--transferring leadership of the party or the government to Kozlov. Another explanation,

and a more compelling one, is that Khrushchev was trying to counter what is apparently a popular belief that he and Kozlov are badly divided. If indeed this was the intent, it did not succeed for there seems to be a growing consensus that Kozlov, cautious, conservative--even doctrinaire--is often at odds with Khrushchev and is the one to gain when some of Khrushchev's more liberal policies are in trouble.

7. A more concrete indication of tension came to light with the removal of Marshal Zakharov as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces in late March; one of his deputies, Admiral Vinogradov, was downgraded shortly afterward. While it is still not known precisely how Zakharov lost out, it is clear that several sensitive issues affecting the military have been under debate. There have been press articles which suggest that Khrushchev may have reopened the question of reductions in conventional forces; other articles suggest another dispute over party control of the military. The question of allocation of resources and perhaps the military implications of the Cuban venture are other possibilities. Whatever the precise reason for the change, Zakharov's successor, Marshal Biryuzov, previously the commander of the strategic rocket

forces, has been a strong supporter of Khrushchev's emphasis on strategic weapons. Biryuzov was in the forefront of the group of military leaders who extolled Khrushchev during the recent anniversary of the battle of Stalingrad.

8. The always sensitive political-military relationship in the Soviet Union may have been further damaged by the case of Oleg Penkovsky, a Soviet official accused of spying for the West. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] that Army General Ivan Serov, head of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Soviet Defense Ministry and former secret policy chief, is in serious trouble and may be in prison because of his daughter's involvement in the affair.

9. Serov has had a close relationship with Khrushchev in the past. Their friendship dates back to service together in the Ukraine just before World War II, and Serov's appointment to head the Committee of State Security (KGB) in 1954 was very likely at Khrushchev's insistence. Long before the apprehension of Penkovsky, however, Serov began to fall from favor. He was removed as KGB chief and transferred to the Main Intelligence Directorate in December 1958. In 1961 he was deprived of

his seat on the party central committee.

10. Serov has not been seen in Moscow since 8 December, a week before the announcement of Penkovsky's arrest. [REDACTED]

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the Ministry of Defense said recently that Serov could not attend the US Armed Forces Day reception to be held in Moscow on 21 May. Recently another military officer has been tentatively identified as Chief of the Main Intelligence Directorate.

11. The affair is also said to have caused difficulties for Defense Minister Malinovsky, presumably because he is Serov's superior in the military establishment. First deputy premier and party presidium member Aleksey Kosygin is also among those alleged to have been "hurt" by the case. His son-in-law, Dzherman Gvishiani, was Penkovsky's immediate superior in the USSR State Committee for Coordination of Scientific Research Work, and the two are rumored to have been close friends. The American Embassy believes that some top-ranking political figures could be manipulating the affair to discredit or disgrace their rivals.

12. Another peculiarity in the political-military sphere is the current position of Marshal Zhukov. Zhukov,

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whose purge in 1957 cleared the road for Khrushchev's accession to overwhelming primacy, has recently been proposed by a Soviet military protocol officer for inclusion on the list of invitees to the US Armed Forces Day reception in Moscow. In recent years, he has been omitted from the invitation list without evoking any Soviet comment. The resurrection of Zhukov's name is clearly a calculated move and raises the possibility that some form of rehabilitation for him is imminent.

13. Such a restoration to political respectability would clearly have a political motivation. His most important sin was his use of his enormous personal popularity in an attempt to gain independence for the military from party control and his re-emergence could be taken as a symbol of a new assertion of increased influence of the professional soldiery as opposed to the party-political military leaders. In addition, his fall from glory has always been considered Khrushchev's doing and his return to even partial favor would reflect adversely on Khrushchev. If he is to be allowed to resume a public role, the 9 May VE Day celebrations provide the earliest logical occasion.

14. There have been other unusual developments suggestive of problems in the leadership. A French Communist

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delegation, for instance, visited in Moscow last week and was entertained by the Soviet party presidium and secretariat as a group--minus Khrushchev, who was on vacation. A public gathering of this sort during Khrushchev's absence is unprecedented in recent years. In addition, the delegation did not later travel to the Black Sea area to consult with Khrushchev. These developments may have been intended to show that Khrushchev's presence is not always necessary for the conduct of important public affairs and to emphasize collectivity in the party leadership.

15. A much more ominous indication comes from the extraordinary alteration in the May Day slogan concerning Yugoslavia. The original slogan was similar to those used for neutral nations and, although it put Yugoslavia in a favored position among them, did not agree with Yugoslavia's claim that its version of socialism was acceptable. The change in the slogan, which now characterizes Yugoslavia as a country "building socialism" and therefore moves it into the same category as other bloc countries, is extremely sensitive because of the Soviet Union's dispute with China over this question. As recently as 30 March, in its letter to the Chinese, Moscow reaffirmed

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that it considered Yugoslavia a "socialist" country. On 3 April, Khrushchev met with Yugoslav leader Vukmanovic-Tempo and told him that the Soviet position was firm on Yugoslavia's being a socialist state and would not be changed.

16. The original slogan, therefore, suggests that a difference of opinion on this question arose which resulted in the temporary use of the same formula concerning Yugoslavia that has been in use since 1958. It is also possible, however, that the original slogan was published at the instigation of leaders who saw in Khrushchev's absence on vacation an opportunity to indicate their disagreement with some of his policies. Party secretaries Kozlov and Ponomarev, for instance, have been critical of the Yugoslav brand of socialism in the not-so-distant past.

17. The alteration of the slogan is unprecedented. The change reflects the importance which Khrushchev attaches to this particular issue. The three-day delay--from 8 to 11 April--however, suggests that Khrushchev may have had difficulty in reasserting his formulation. The correction will drive home to the Chinese the intention of Khrushchev and his followers in the leadership

to insist on their fundamental doctrinal position in any bilateral talks.

18. All of these signs and symbols have appeared at a time when one of Khrushchev's earlier policies of de-Stalinization was being reversed. Last fall Khrushchev personally launched the latest wave of exposures of the Stalin era. He has often used de-Stalinization as a political weapon in the past, and he apparently felt that another jolt of this kind would help to spur on the major administrative reorganization that he was contemplating. However, members of the liberal intelligentsia interpreted de-Stalinization to mean liberalization, and moved far beyond the established line by raising the major moral problem that men who made their career under Stalin share guilt for his crimes.

19. The party attempted to tighten the line in a meeting with the intellectuals in December but resistance continued. In early March the liberal writers were again called in. It became clear that the leadership was launching a major crackdown; Khrushchev himself redefined the party's line. He called for a de-emphasis in literature of personal suffering under Stalin, reaffirmed Stalin's contributions to the Communist movement as well as his

abuses of power, and for the first time publicly defended his own actions during the Stalin years. He made it clear that the party would control both the form and content of Soviet literature and art. Apparently even this was not enough; the party now has announced that its central committee will convene on 28 May to discuss "ideological work." Apparently the party is still not satisfied that it is winning "positive loyalty" from its intellectuals. Khrushchev more than anyone else could be blamed for the current disarray in the arts.